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FROM: PARIS

TO: Secretary of State

NO: 871, AUGUST 18, NOON

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ACTION DEPARTMENT 871, INFORMATION BONN 101, LONDON 193, MOSCOW 59, BERLIN 63.

IN OUR VIEW SOVIET-EAST GERMAN DECISION TO ERECT BARRIER BETWEEN TWO PARTS BERLIN PRESENTS WEST WITH MAJOR OPPORTUNITY TO FOCUS WORLD ATTENTION ON (1) UNHAPPY SITUATION RESIDENTS EAST GERMANY AND, BY EXTENSION, REST SOV BLOC, AND LIKEWISE ON (2) NATURE BLOC POLICY DISREGARDING BOTH EXISTENT LEGAL COMMITMENTS OF USSR AND HUMAN ASPIRATIONS POPULATION UNDER BLOC CONTROL. IT APPEARS THAT KHRUSHCHEV AND ULBRICHT HAD ALWAYS INTENDED TO TAKE SOME ACTION OF THIS SORT BUT AT LATER TIME AND IN DIFFERENT CONTEXT INVOLVING COVER OF EITHER SEPARATE US-GDR TREATY OR INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT INVOLVING WESTERN POWERS WITH USSR-GDR. AUGMENTATION OF REFUGEE FLOW FORCED HAND COMMUNIST LEADERS WHO MUST HAVE DECIDED PROPAGANDA LOSSES HAD TO BE ACCEPTED TO BRING ABOUT QUICK END TO OUTWARD FLOW RESIDENTS. IN OUR VIEW IT WILL BE REGRETTABLE IF UNDERSTANDABLE ANGUISH FELT PARTICULARLY IN WEST BERLIN IS ALLOWED TO BECOME DOMINANT MOOD IN WEST AND CLEAR EVIDENCE SOVIET BLOC FAILURE IN PEACEFUL COMPETITION BECOMES OVERSHADOWED BY PREOCCUPATION WITH WESTERN INABILITY PREVENT ACTION IN AREAS UNDER SOVIET CONTROL.

BLOCKAGE EXITS FORMERLY OPEN RESIDENTS GDR IS THUS ANOTHER STEP IN LONG POSTWAR HISTORY TRANSFORMATION EASTERN EUROPE INTO BELT SOVIET-ORIENTED STATES WITH SOVIET-STYLE INSTITUTIONS. DIFFICULTY FOR WEST IN FINDING APPROPRIATE RESPONSE IS ONLY ANOTHER INSTANCE WESTERN INABILITY DECISIVELY INFLUENCE DEVELOPMENTS WHICH USSR CONSIDERED NECESSARY OR DESIRABLE IN SPHERE LYING UNDER SHADOW SOVIET ARMS SINCE IT IS CLEAR THAT MOST SERIOUS MEASURES OF RETALIATION AVAILABLE TO WEST IN CURRENT SITUATION OPEN REAL POSSIBILITY

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-2- 871, AUGUST 18, NOON, FROM PARIS

OF BRINGING ON SOONER RATHER THAN LATER CRISIS INVOLVING WESTERN ACCESS TO WEST BERLIN OR WEST BERLIN-WEST GERMAN COMMUNICATIONS, IT SEEMS TO US THAT WE WILL HAVE TO BE CONTENT WITH MINOR MEASURES SUCH AS TTD RESTRICTIONS, AND DRAW MAXIMUM SATISFACTION FROM PROPAGANDA EXPLOITATION. FOR THIS REASON WE THINK THESE MEASURES OF RETALIATION SHOULD BE UNDERPLAYED RATHER THAN OVERPLAYED IN OUR PUBLIC POSITION, BECAUSE THEY OBVIOUSLY DO NOT GIVE FULL VENT TO THE SENSE OF OUTRAGE FELT NOT ONLY IN WEST BERLIN BUT ELSEWHERE IN THE FREE WORLD.

WE WONDER IF MORE ATTENTION SHOULD NOT BE DEVOTED TO POSSIBILITY OF SEIZING UN WITH THIS ISSUE AT MOMENT WHEN HUMAN ASPECTS RATHER THAN LEGAL ISSUES ARE AT FOREFRONT. IT APPEARS TO US ALMOST UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO SHOW WORLD FAILURE OF SOVIET SYSTEM AND CYNICAL, CRUEL MEANS WHICH IT EMPLOYS. EVEN IF RESULT WERE SIMPLY UN PRESSURE FOR NEGOTIATION ON WHOLE COMPLEX OF PROBLEMS THIS SHOULD NOT BE TOO UNCOMFORTABLE WITH NEGOTIATIONS LOOMING ON HORIZON IN ANY CASE. WE REALIZE THAT UN ACTIVITY WOULD NOT RESOLVE PROBLEM AND WE ARE AWARE OF PRACTICAL DIFFICULTIES, INCLUDING FACT THAT FRENCH WOULD PROBABLY OPPOSE. BUT FOCUSSING SPOTLIGHT ON SOVIET ACTION IN EAST BERLIN MIGHT GIVE KHRUSHCHEV PAUSE IN REGARD TO FUTURE UNILATERAL MOVES.

AS TO CONSEQUENCES OF SOLIDIFYING FRONTIER BETWEEN GDR AND WEST GERMANY, I RECALL THAT FORMER BERLIN MAYOR ERNEST REUTER OFTEN TOLD ME THAT IF ALLIES WERE NOT ABLE TO PURSUE SUCCESSFUL POLICY OF REUNIFICATION GERMANS THEMSELVES WOULD TAKE MATTER IN HAND. ERECTION OF LATEST BARRIER MAY RESULT SOONER OR LATER IN PRESSURES WITHIN GERMANY FOR NEGOTIATIONS TO BRING ABOUT SUCH REUNIFICATION UNLESS WESTERN ALLIES ARE ABLE TO OFFER SOME HOPE THAT THEIR POLICY WILL ULTIMATELY BRING SOME SUCCESS IN THIS DIRECTION.

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